

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 862

PS 030 596

AUTHOR Garrett, Sherrye Dee; Rechis, Ruth; Garcia, Robert; Rivera, Linda; Landreth, Linda

TITLE The Literacy Connection.

PUB DATE 2002-04-00

NOTE 15p.; In: "Early Childhood Literacy: Programs & Strategies To Develop Cultural, Linguistic, Scientific and Healthcare Literacy for Very Young Children & their Families, 2001 Yearbook"; see PS 030 591.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Child Development Centers; College School Cooperation; Early Childhood Education; English (Second Language); Family Involvement; *Family Literacy; *Laboratory Schools; Limited English Speaking; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; Spanish Speaking

IDENTIFIERS Corpus Christi Independent School District TX; Texas (Corpus Christi); *Texas A and M University Corpus Christi

ABSTRACT

This chapter is part of a book that recounts the year's work at the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) at Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi. Rather than an "elitist" laboratory school for the children of university faculty, the dual-language ECDC is a collaboration between the Corpus Christi Independent School District and the university, with an enrollment representative of Corpus Christi's population. The chapter describes and evaluates The Literacy Connection, an ECDC program designed to improve parents' literacy skills so that their children's literacy skills, in turn, will improve. The program involves one-on-one tutoring for parents by university graduate assistants, with special emphasis on parents of 3- and 4-year-olds. The project implementation involved several stages: (1) promoting awareness of the project within the university, the Corpus Christi Independent School District, and the educational community outside the university; (2) recruiting parents who wanted to increase their literacy and English language skills and develop basic computer skills; (3) soliciting support for materials and incentives from community representatives; (4) conducting the tutoring sessions; (5) presenting a parent workshop; (6) recognizing the success of the parents; and (7) evaluating the results. The evaluation found that learners were satisfied, and that the program had a high retention rate. (Contains 11 references.) (EV)

CEDER Yearbook 2001

Chapter 5

The Literacy Connection

Sherrye Dee Garrett

Ruth Rechis

Robert Garcia

Linda Rivera

Linda Landreth

PS 030596

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

Jack Cassidy
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Educators are constantly looking for the most effective way to teach students how to read and write. Every approach is explored — phonics, whole language, basal readers, and more. Strategy after strategy is tried and evaluated. These efforts are noble, useful, and important. They must come second, however, to another important element in helping children read: the influence of students' first teachers—parents. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) and its on-campus lab school, the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC), recognized the role of parents in the education of children and established a project to improve students' chances of literacy success by helping parents improve their own literacy abilities. The ECDC serves children age three through grade three with 50% of the children from Spanish-dominant homes and 50% from English-dominant homes. Sixty-three percent of the children are in free or reduced lunch programs. The parent project, called The Literacy Connection, was established in January 2001. It is funded through a congressional appropriation. This chapter describes the program and reports the initial results of the parent education project.

The Role of Parents

The Literacy Connection project is based on research that underscores the importance of family attitudes, values, and practices in developing positive literacy development in children. (Mikulecky, 1998; Powell, 1997; Henderson, 1988; Sticht, 1995). Strickland (1998) found that most families are more than willing to make special efforts to improve the lives of their children. Families function as the first and most important educators of their children, they understand their role in providing positive learning environments, and they are willing to seek help in creating that positive learning environment at home. Parents with positive attitudes toward literacy model reading and writing activities and provide books for their children (Snow & Tabors, 1998). Seeing adults read for their own enjoyment conveys a powerful positive message to children about the value of reading (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2001).

The Literacy Connection uses a parent involvement model of family literacy. Parent involvement programs work with parents to increase their abilities to support their children's literacy development (Tracey, 2001). These programs have a demonstrated positive effect

on student performance. Padak and Rashinski (1994) found that children who are the most successful in learning to read and write come from homes in which family literacy is part of family life. The specific parent-child interactions associated with children's literacy success include:

- Parental reading to and with children
- Complex language between parent and children
- Literacy modeling and support in the home (Mikulecky, 1998).

The Literacy Connection tutors show parents how to help their children through sharing books. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommends that parents and caregivers should read to children every day (Neuman et. al., 2001). Strickland and Taylor (1989) describe how reading aloud to children and sharing books with them support their literacy development in a variety of ways:

- The parent-child interaction takes place in an atmosphere of success.
- The activity involves spoken language in a child-centered atmosphere.
- Children acquire spoken language in a meaningful context.
- Children are presented with the whole system of language.

Their findings were consistent across ethnic and educational levels, parental background and socioeconomic levels, geography, and family configuration.

Because of the significant relationship between parents' literacy levels and interactions with their children, The Literacy Connection project was designed to provide literacy training to parents. Parents contribute to family literacy by developing their own literacy (Auerbach, 1989). Adults who receive literacy instruction will transfer their positive attitudes to their children (Sticht, 1995). This positive attitude toward literacy crosses cultural lines. Many Latino families cite a good education as one of the values that caused them to

immigrate to the United States. Many low-income families, as well put a high value on education (Mikulecky, 1998).

Overview of The Literacy Connection Components *Framework of the Project*

The Literacy Connection is a parent education project that provides one-to-one tutoring for parents with low literacy and/or low English language skills. The tutoring is provided by TAMUCC graduate assistants selected specifically for the project. The adult learners are parents of children attending the ECDC. Special emphasis is still placed on serving parents of three- and four-year-old students to provide the earliest intervention possible. Initial staff for the project included a university faculty member who served as the project coordinator and four graduate assistants in the College of Education.

The project involved several stages:

1. Promoting awareness of the project within the university, the Corpus Christi Independent School District, and the educational community outside the university
2. Recruiting parents who wanted to increase their literacy and English language skills and develop basic computer skills
3. Soliciting support for materials and incentives from community representatives
4. Conducting the tutoring sessions
5. Presenting a parent workshop
6. Recognizing the success of the parents
7. Evaluating the results.

Project Awareness and Recruitment

University faculty members were selected to serve as an advisor committee for The Literacy Connection project. Faculty and staff were also asked to help recruit graduate assistants by discussing the project in their graduate and upper level undergraduate classes. Additionally, graduate assistants were solicited through

announcements on electronic and physical campus bulletin boards. The project was also announced at meetings of the campus student reading council, the local reading council, a reading conference planning committee, research presentations, and school district faculty meetings. The project was described in university and school district publications and newsletters.

Four graduate assistants were selected for the project. Two graduate assistants were bilingual, one had moderate Spanish language skills, and one spoke only English. All of the graduate assistants enrolled in the TAMUCC course College and Adult Literacy.

Parent Recruitment

After the project staff was in place, outreach activities were initiated to inform parents of the project and to solicit their participation. The project staff, ECDC principal, and the ECDC parent liaison used a variety of approaches to inform parents of the opportunity to improve their literacy and English language skills:

- The title "Making Reading Fun" was given to the tutoring component of the project. The tutoring was presented as a 12-week course to help parents help themselves and their children. Parents were told that those completing the course would receive \$100 in gift certificates from local businesses.
- The project director met with ECDC faculty to ask their assistance in encouraging parents to take advantage of the project.
- The project director addressed parents at the school literacy night and special school project meetings.
- An informational flyer in English and Spanish was sent home with ECDC students.
- The ECDC parent liaison sent out information messages in English and Spanish to every ECDC parent over the school's phonemaster system.
- An information article was printed in the school's newsletter.

- All ECDC parents were invited to an informational breakfast where the program was described and sign-up sheets were distributed. Bilingual graduate assistants answered questions from the parents.

As a result of the awareness and recruitment campaign, 17 parents signed up to participate in the program. Fifteen of the parents remained in the program for the full twelve weeks. All parents were honored at the end of the 12-week course at a recognition reception.

Community Support

The Literacy Connection staff contacted local businesses and commercial vendors for donations of money and materials for the project. Two local bookstores provided free children's books; representatives of commercial vendors donated instructional materials, children's books, and puppets; and the director of the campus Teacher Resource Center donated children's books that were no longer used in the center. The local Wal Mart donated \$500 toward the purchase of gift certificates and a local grocery store provided refreshments for the project recognition reception. The children's books were offered to the adult learner to take home to their children at the end of each tutoring session. Representatives of all the community supporters were invited to the project recognition reception and received a certificate of appreciation.

Tutoring Sessions

The tutoring sessions were held in the building that housed the Early Childhood Development Center and were scheduled at the convenience of the adult learners. Some learners came early in the morning after they brought their children to school. Some came in the afternoon before ECDC classes were dismissed. Other learners came at night. Childcare was provided by paid undergraduate students. The childcare was free to parents.

The first tutoring sessions included a learner interview, individual reading assessment, and a computer awareness survey. Subsequent sessions were instructional in nature. A theme-based, learner-centered

approach to instruction governed the instructional program developed for the participants.

The content of each learner's sessions depended upon that learner's interest and needs. Each session included instruction in vocabulary, comprehension and survival reading skills. Each session ended with the modeling of a strategy the learner could use with children at home. Some sessions were videotaped so learners could evaluate their own performance on reading tasks, especially those they would share with their children.

Parent Workshop

The Literacy Connection sponsored a reading workshop that was open to all ECDC parents, university students, and the general public. The workshop featured a presentation on oral language and stories by the Dean of the College of Education of the university. Another university faculty member gave a presentation in Spanish and English about reading aloud to children. The presentation featured Spanish language children's books that reflected Latino heritage and culture.

Recognition Event

A reception was held at the end of the 12-week program to recognize learners, university and school district supporters, and community sponsors. Each student received a certificate of achievement, gift certificates for the local Wal Mart and bookstores, and a new children's book. University and school district supporters and community sponsors received certificates of appreciation.

Evaluation Model

The Logic Model of evaluation was selected by the outside evaluator of the congressional grant. Therefore, the objectives for The Literacy Connection were developed using that model. The results of the first semester of the project will be discussed according to the goals outlined in that model. The components of the Logic Model as they relate to The Literacy Connection are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Literacy Connection Logic Model

Components	Recruitment	Family Literacy	Research/ Publication
Activities	Work with ECDC school	Organize sessions Provide one-to- one tutoring	Collection information for reports and website. Assess improvements of participants over time.
Target Groups	ECDC faculty and staff ECDC parents	Parents of young children at the ECDC	Adult literacy educators
Short Term Outcomes	Increased awareness of the program Increased interest in the program	Increased basic literacy skills Increased basic computer skills Increased awareness of activities with children	Website creation
Long Term Outcomes	Increased participation in the program	Increased interest in reading and literacy	Completion of a research paper recording progress of the program

The Activities section of the model is outlined in greater detail in Table 2.

Table 2

The Literacy Connection Service Delivery Activities and Outcomes

I. Major Service Delivery Activities	II. Outcomes: The learner will....
One-to-one tutoring of parents Parent workshops	Apply word knowledge strategies to identify unknown words. Increase vocabulary Comprehend a variety of texts Obtain information needed for daily living from a variety of sources. Demonstrate basic writing skills
One-to-one tutoring of parents Modeling reading aloud to children Videotaping of parents reading to children for self-analysis Parent workshops	Select appropriate reading materials for children Read expressively to children Involve children in listening/reading experiences
One-to-one tutoring of parents Guidance/modeling of activities on computers	Reduce anxiety about using computers Develop computer vocabulary Use basic work processing skills Access and use instructional programs Access Internet sites

Analysis of The Literacy Connection Activities

Learner Population

Seventeen parents signed up for tutoring. Fifteen parents completed the 12-week program. The statistical breakdown of the learner population is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Statistical Breakdown of The Literacy Connection Learners.

Characteristic	Number
Gender	
Female	11
Male	4
First language	
English	6
Spanish	9
Age	
0-25 years	1
26-35 years	10
36-45 years	4
46 and older	0
Age of children whose parents participated in the program	
0-1	4
2-3	5
4-5	8
6-7	5
8 or older	14

Number and Length of Tutoring Sessions

The number and length of the tutoring sessions varied by learner. Some learners attended one-hour sessions once a week. Other learners came once a week for 1 1/2- to 2-hour sessions. Several learners asked to attend sessions twice a week. The total number of tutoring sessions and hours are shown in Table 4. Ninety hours of childcare were provided during the tutoring sessions.

Table 4

Total Tutoring Sessions and Hours for Learners in The Literacy Connection

Measure	Number
Tutoring sessions	Total number of tutoring sessions
Reading	25
Computers	19
TOTAL	44
Tutoring hours	Total number of tutoring hours
Reading	167
Computers	28
TOTAL	195

Organization of Tutoring Sessions

The content of each tutoring session was dictated by the needs and interests of the adult learners. However, each reading session included direct instruction in vocabulary, comprehension, and survival reading skills. Each session ended with a modeling activity for parents to try with their children at home.

The content requested by parents included money-management skills, work-related reading, and improving communication between the parents and the school. One learner wanted to learn how to write checks. Another learner needed vocabulary related to school so she could understand communications she received from the school and she could write notes to her child's teacher. Another learner wanted to learn how to read maps and street names so he could become an independent driver who no longer relied on landmarks and visual cues when he traveled.

An important component of the reading tutoring sessions was the modeling of good read aloud practices for learners. Learners were videotaped reading a children's book aloud. They then watched the videotapes with their tutors and discussed ways to improve their reading. One mother read books quickly and in a monotone. When she observed herself on the tape, she commented, "That's really boring" (personal communication, March, 2001). Her tutor demonstrated how to read with expression. A second videotape of the same learner showed great improvement. Several learners were

videotaped reading to their own children. These tapes were used to help the learners evaluate their reading performance with their children.

Computer sessions were also provided on a one-to-one basis. Learners completed a computer awareness survey, the results of which were used to establish the starting point of their instruction. Learners were given guidance in manipulating computer hardware and software. Lessons began with basic instruction for turning the computer on and off, using a mouse, and using desktop icons. Some parents inputted their own writing into word processing programs. Later sessions involved the learners using the Internet to access information and locate sites that could be used by their children.

At the end of each tutoring session, learners selected children's books from The Literacy Connection collection. These books were taken home as gifts for their children. Many times, the tutor and learner selected a book during the session and practiced reading it aloud so the learner could later share the book with a child. One learner commented that her children greeted her on her return from tutoring with happy cries of "What books did you bring this time?" (personal communication, September, 2001).

Evaluation of the Program

Learner satisfaction with the tutoring program was solicited through end-of-program interviews and surveys. All of the learners indicated that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their experience. Approximately one-third of the learners participated in computer lessons. All reported increased comfort with computer tasks. Success of a learner-centered program is defined by the satisfaction of the learners themselves. Each learner had specific personal goals for the instruction. One learner's confidence in her language increased so much that she volunteered to serve on a church committee, a goal she had held for many years. Another learner reported her satisfaction in being able to help her child with homework.

One significant measure of student satisfaction is retention rate. Eighty-six percent of the parents signed up for the second Literacy Connection program in the fall of 2001.

Conclusions

The effectiveness of the basic design of The Literacy Connection program is supported by learner responses on individual surveys and anecdotal evidence from learners. Most learners attended tutoring sessions consistently, even when obstacles such as car trouble or caregiver problems arose. The high retention rate for learners is indicative of their interest in continuing with the program. The second Literacy Connection program was offered in the fall of 2001. Enrollment in the program doubled, and additional graduate assistants had to be hired to provide tutoring.

Several elements of the program contributed to learner satisfaction and success. The Literacy Connection offered tutoring sessions at times convenient to the learners, free childcare was provided, and the lessons were learner-centered. Areas targeted for improvement in the second Literacy Connection program include improved record keeping, expanded instructional materials, and additional parent workshops.

References

- Auerbach, E. (1989). Toward a socio-contextual approach to family literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59, 165-181.
- Henderson, A. (1988). Parents are a school's best friend. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70, 148-153.
- Mikulecky, L. (1998). Parent and children interactions. In Sapin, Connie & Padak, (Eds.), *The family literacy resource notebook*. Kent, OH: The Ohio Literacy Resource Center.
- Neuman, S.B., Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (2001). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Padak, N. & Rashinski, T. (1994). *Family literacy: Who benefits?* (Occasional Paper No. 2). In Sapin, Connie & Padak, N.D. (Eds.). *The family literacy resource notebook*. Kent, OH: The Ohio Literacy Resource Center.
- Powell, J. (1997). *Parents as early partners in the literacy process*. Paper presented at the Fifth Annual Conference on Family Literacy, Louisville, KY.
- Snow, C. & Tabors, P. (1998). *Intergeneration Transfer of Literacy*. In Sapin, Connie & Padak, N.D. (Eds.). *The family literacy resource notebook*. Kent, OH: The Ohio Literacy Resource Center.
- Strickland, D. (1998). Meeting the needs of families in family literacy programs. In Sapin, Connie & Padak, N.D. (Eds.). *The family literacy resource notebook*. Kent, OH: The Ohio Literacy Resource Center.
- Strickland, D. & Taylor, D. (1989). Family storybook reading: Implications for children, families and curriculum. In Strickland, D.S. & Morrow, L.M. (Eds.). *Emerging literacy: Young children learn to read and write*. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.
- Sticht, T.G. (1995, November/December). Adult education for family literacy. *Adult Learning*, 23-24.
- Tracey, D.H. (2001). Enhancing literacy growth through home-school connections. In Strickland, D. & Morrow, L.M. (Eds.). *Beginning reading and writing*. New York: Teachers College Press.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

(5) (Literacy Connection.) by Sherrye Dee Garrett.

Title: Programs & Strategies to Develop Cultural, Linguistic, Scientific Early Childhood Literacy and Healthcare Literacy for Very Young Children & Their Families	
Author(s): Cassidy, Jack and Garrett, Sherrye (eds.)	
Corporate Source: Center for Educational Development, Evaluation & Research (CEDER) Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi	Publication Date: April 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1



Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and/or paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A



Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B



Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: Jack Cassidy	Printed Name/Position/Title: Jack Cassidy Author	
Organization/Address: 4300 Ocean Drive Corpus Christi, TX 78412	Telephone: (361) 825-5411	FAX: (361) 825-3377
	E-Mail Address: jcassidy@falcon.tamucc.edu	Date: Aug 13, 2002

Sign here, please

650302

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:	C.E.D.E.R.
Address:	6300 Ocean Drive Early Childhood Development Center Corpus Christi, Texas 78412
Price:	\$10.00

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse: Karen E. Smith, Acquisitions ERIC/EECE, University of Illinois Children's Research Center 61 Gerty Drive Champaign, IL 61820

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to: